

EXHIBIT

DATE

1/27/19

HB

140

COMMENTS OF WARREN ILLI

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Warren Illi. I live in Flathead County, I have a cabin in Lincoln County and a farm by Malta. I am similar to 200,000 Montana citizens, who love to hunt and fish all over Montana. My wife, children and grandchildren hunt and fish. That is why we live in Montana.

I am here to represent myself and my family, and the over 200 members of the Chain of Lakes Homeowners Assn. This Association own home and vacation homes the Thompson Lakes area between Kalispell and Libby. House Bill 140 will directly affect hundreds-of- thousands of Montana citizens, visitors to Montana and the people I represent.

Regarding HB-140, I have only two thoughts to briefly discuss with you.

First, we generally support modest increases in the FWP budget through increased license fees.

- Current Montana hunting and fishing license fees are fair and reasonable. They have not been raised in 10 years.

Second, we have concerns about some of proposals in HB-140 that will raise license fees.

Let's very briefly expand on those two thoughts.

First, the overall FWP budget and license fees.

- License fees and some matching federal money from the sale of hunting and fishing gear provide nearly 90% of the FWP budget.

- I will use myself as an example. Each year, I buy virtually every hunting and fishing license sold by the state. Yet my annual expenditure for hunting and fishing licenses is less than what I spend for a dinner out with my wife. It is also less than what I spend for bird seed for my backyard bird feeders.

- If FWP is not properly funded, the cuts will not happen in Helena, but at the local level. FWP field services to the citizens of Montana will be cut.

- For the last 20 years I have been the Chairman of the Lions Club annual family Ice Fishing Derby

HB140
ILLI
(11)

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on Smith Lake. This year, I asked FWP to plow and sand the road into the Smith Lake access site and bring in a couple of porta-potties to accommodate the 500 citizens participating in the fishing derby. They did what I requested and help make our family fish derby a success. So the 500 derby participants thank FWP. But that is an example of what kind of local FWP services that will be cut without adequate funding.

-Montana has hundreds of good fishing lakes and reservoirs. Those provide great fishing, but need too occasionally be stocked with small hatchery fish due to the lack of natural spawning habitat. Without adequate funding, fish hatchery production will be reduced & fishing quality lost. That will be bad for Montana citizens and our tourist industry.

Overall, FWP simply needs more funding to maintain the current hunting and fishing quality we enjoy. Increased FWP funding will come from only source, license fees

Now let me comment on two specific provisions of HB-140.

-Over the last 20 years, legislators have implemented a number of free licenses for senior citizens, handicapped citizens, Montana youth and veterans. HB-140 wipes out all of those past legislative actions. Currently, senior citizens must pay \$8.00 for a Conservation License. That conservation license includes a free fishing license and free upland bird hunting license. Under HB-140, in 2016, seniors will have to pay \$8 to buy a conservation license, \$10.50 for a fishing license, \$10 for a basic hunting license and \$3.75 for an upland bird license. That's \$32.25 for what is now \$8.00. That is a 400% increase. That not a good way to treat our senior citizens, veterans, disabled hunter and youth.

- HB -140 also implements a new \$10 basic hunting license. Citizens must spend \$10 to buy the new basic hunting license that doesn't give them the right to hunt anything, just the privilege to a real deer or elk tag. This seems like an unnecessary layer of costly government paperwork that doesn't put any more deer or elk on the ground.

-Our alternative to HB-140 is to leave the current licensing system in place. It is time tested and working. We recommend to simply raise every hunting and fishing license by 5% or 10 % or whatever is appropriate, rounded to the nearest dollar. That would be simple and fair to most citizens and provided an increase in FWP funding.

Thank you for listening to me.

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